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forging which will, within a few months, complete a trunk line from the Persian Gulf to central Europe; and the existing railways from Constantinople through Sofia, Nisch and Belgrade to Vienna, occupy the only favorable all-rail connection. The Servian plateau, which is not very lofty, and is much beset by mountain chains, is the home of the only community of the thirty million Slavs west of Russia which has a government of its own, except its little brother Montenegro. That is of course one of the reasons why Austria has recently forced a war upon Servia. It is to prevent control by a rising power of the south-eastern outlet of the dual empire.

Of the Servians as a capable people the author draws a convincing picture. He believed in his countrymen before the battle of Kumanovo; in 1912 and before the fierce struggles of 1913 with the Bulgarians, which proved to Europe their capacity as soldiers. Prince Lazarovich's praise of the land system and social structure of the Servians is borne out by the facts. It is one of those happy countries in which there are few or no large landed estates, but an intelligent land-owning peasantry. Yet it is a striking proof of the rapidity of changes in that country that a plan for the political reorganization of the Balkans which seemed to the author of this book practical two years ago, has been put out of possibility by the recent wars in the peninsula.

In his study of the general European complications, and particularly of the supposed intention of Austria and Germany to wrest the dominion of the Mediterranean from Great Britain, the author is less successful. It is a little difficult for him to make out his thesis that "the Monroe Doctrine brings the United States in the concerns of the European family of nations." Nevertheless, to the reader who desires to understand more clearly the involved relations of Europe and Turkey with the Balkan situation, the book will offer satisfactory information and discussion, and should be on the shelf of timely volumes.

ALBERT BUSHNELL HART.

The Rise and Fall of the High Commission. BY ROLAND G. USHER. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913. Pp. 380.)

At the time of its abolition in 1641 the high commission was a stated law court with regular procedure for the trial of cases between contesting parties. As such it had been in evidence with increasing distinctness since the middle of Elizabeth's reign, at which time it became apparent that commissions of ecclesiastical inquiry were becoming transformed

into permanent ecclesiastical courts. The origin of the high commission, therefore, lies in the committees appointed by Henry VIII for the establishment of the royal supremacy, and to the historical development of this practice between 1535 and 1580 Mr. Usher devotes his earlier chapters.

From the beginning there is evidence of opposition to the commission. When it became a regular court this opposition was voiced by the common-law judges who saw in the ecclesiastical tribunal a dangerous rival in jurisdiction. The weapons employed were injunctions ("prohibitions") against the verdicts of the high commission, and the conflict was particularly violent in the time of Coke. With him, however, the opposition on legal and judicial grounds came practically to an end, and the Puritan resistance of the final thirty years was based on the belief that the objects of the commission were contrary to the law of God. At the same time illegality and tyranny were the grounds upon which a Puritan parliament abolished this ecclesiastical court.

The investigation of this subject is much hampered by the fragmentary condition of the records. Registers, or official reports on the nature of the cases, have been lost, and even the few dockets are merely formal minutes of attendance and procedure. From these, however, there is evidence to show that the popular view of the court as an engine of tyranny must undergo some revision. It appears to have been a tribunal much frequented by suitors against other parties, so that about eighty per cent of the cases found were of this class. Of the remainder the greater part were undertaken *ex officio* on the request of poor persons, or were applications for enforcement by some bishop, leaving about five per cent of the cases to the actual initiative of the commission. The possibilities of tyranny were, therefore, greatly restricted. The treachery of figures, however, is encountered in the estimate of the popularity of the court. If the cases pending were sometimes over a thousand at a time, the five per cent would give considerable opportunity for persecution if the commission were so inclined.

Historical students are much indebted to Mr. Usher for the chapters which describe the actual workings of the commission, both in its earlier history and in the period of the Puritan conflict. The supposition that the records as well as the court were purposely obliterated is only tentatively suggested and not convincing. In general the author has used his materials with great modesty and effectiveness.

J. M. VINCENT.